



PRESS RELEASE

Recreational Fishing Alliance

5724 N. Route 9, New Gretna, NJ 08224

P: 888-564-6732 F: 609-294-3812

For Immediate Release
Contact: Jim Hutchinson, Jr.

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888 564-6732

RFA APPLAUDS NEW MENHADEN LAW

(9/18/2010) *New Gretna, NJ* – Legislation governing the commercial harvest of menhaden in New Jersey coastal waters took effect on September 9, following its unanimous passage in the state Senate (37-0) on June 10. The new law which has the support of major saltwater fishing organizations in New Jersey passed automatically without the governor's signature, which is not required 45 days after legislation is passed successfully from chambers.

The Recreational Fishing Alliance (RFA) worked for months with various legislators to get the law passed. In a June 2, 2010 press release, RFA reported that concentrated fishing pressure from displaced New England herring boats had caused a significant increase in effort along the New Jersey coast, with many out-of-state boats using state-issued carry permits to facilitate shipment of menhaden out of state.

“At a committee meeting of the New Jersey Marine Fisheries Council last fall, the issue was discussed about needing to limit the issuance of these permits as there was concern that vessels from New England would come down and carry the menhaden back up north to supplement their bait issues as a result of herring quota decreases,” Capt. Adam Nowalsky, Chairman of the RFA-NJ chapter said in June, noting that “out-of-state boats” were contributing to a localized bunker depletion problem in New Jersey.

Sponsored in the Assembly by Matthew Milam (D-District 1), Nelson Albano (D-District 1) and Celeste Riley (D-District 3), and in the Senate by Jeff Van Drew (D-District 1), the new law limits entry provisions for commercial owners looking to harvest menhaden for sale as bait, while also limiting the size and power of boats participating in the menhaden bait harvest. Following a June 2 meeting with Senator Robert Smith (D-District 17) Chairman of the Senate Environment and Energy Committee with, RFA's Executive Director Jim Donofrio said he was thankful for legislative response to a growing issue.

“When it was announced that the New England fleet was going to be restricted from the harvest of herring for seasonal bait use, it was clear what was going to happen,” Donofrio said. Striped bass anglers chasing bunker schools along the Jersey coast in May quickly made their voices heard as competing bait boats created a virtual “bunker rodeo” within coastal waters, decimating much of the migrating menhaden stocks upon which recreational anglers depend for targeting trophy spring stripers. “At that time, we'd already been in 8 or 9 months worth of discussions with the New Jersey bait industry on how best to address this issue,” Donofrio said.

This past June, the RFA sent an email blast reminding anglers that as of 2002, New Jersey law prohibits the taking of menhaden for reduction purposes (processing bunker into fish meal, fertilizer, poultry feed, etc.) in state waters. “On behalf of our fishing community the RFA applauds the primary sponsors of this important legislation including the Cape May team of Van Drew, Albano and Milam, along with Assemblywoman Riley of Bridgeton, for spearheading this legislative effort,” Donofrio said.

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The Recreational Fishing Alliance is a national, grassroots political action organization representing recreational fishermen and the recreational fishing industry on marine fisheries issues. RFA's Mission is to safeguard the rights of saltwater anglers, protect marine, boat and tackle industry jobs, and ensure the long-term sustainability of our Nation's saltwater fisheries. For more information, call 888-JOIN-RFA or visit www.joinrfa.org.